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December 2, 1996

(Justice)

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*The following statement was issued today by Chris Decker, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. It was also read in the House of Assembly:*

### Government makes settlement offers to Mount Cashel claimants

I rise today to advise honourable members that the government has reached a settlement in the claim of one of the victims of abuse at the Mount Cashel orphanage, whose matter is currently before the court. Government has also made an offer to settle the claims of 38 other individuals whose cases have not yet gone forward.

Danny Williams, the lawyer representing these 38 other claimants, has informed me that he will advise his clients the offer is a fair and reasonable one, and I am pleased today to tell you that Mr. Williams will recommend his clients accept the offer.

The concerted efforts of counsel for the claimants and counsel for the government have yielded a settlement offer which I believe is fair, in light of the circumstances. It will provide reasonable compensation to those who have suffered as a result of their mistreatment at Mount Cashel.

In recognition of the length of time that these matters have remained unresolved, the government wishes to finalize these claims expeditiously so as to bring some closure for the victims. And, the government will seek reimbursement from the Christian Brothers and the Roman Catholic Church.

The government has taken the extraordinary measure of offering to settle these claims in full at this time, in order to end the distress caused to the victims by the prolonged proceedings to date.

This measure is a departure from common legal practice, in which it would have been normal for the government to insist that the considerable share of the liability of the other parties be settled as part of any settlement with clients.

We have taken this step because we do not wish to see those who have suffered mistreatment at Mount Cashel, and who have had to relive those memories in the course of the Hughes Commission's work, to once again relive them before a court of law.

So, the government has taken the unusual step of offering a full settlement of 38 outstanding claims. We will take it upon ourselves to seek reimbursement from the Christian Brothers and the Roman Catholic Church for their fair share of the costs.

One of the government's urgent priorities for some time has been to see these matters settled. Through diligence and hard work by all parties who have been involved over the last few weeks, I am pleased to say that we have been able to reach a fair accommodation. For this, I commend all parties.

1996 12 02

2:05 p.m.



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